

BOOK REVIEW:  
WHERE HAVE ALL THE WILDFLOWERS GONE?

Mohlenbrock, R. H. 1983. Where have all the wildflowers gone? Macmillan Publ. Co., New York, 239 pp. (price \$15.95).

This book is a popular guide to selected threatened and endangered wildflowers of the United States. Mohlenbrock divides the country into seven geographical areas and discusses the rare plants that occur within each area. There are usually 15–20 species treated in each region; each is allotted a brief, simple description and a page or two of text. In all, 120 plants are discussed, with 40 illustrated by color photographs and 80 by excellent line drawings. The latter were prepared by the author's son, Mark Mohlenbrock, himself a plant taxonomist and accomplished botanical illustrator.

The first chapter, entitled "The Disappearance of *Thismia*", unlike the others, is not a regional account of rare plants. Instead, it details the story of the remarkable plant *Thismia americana*, found only twice in a sand prairie on the south side of Chicago and never again seen. The second half of the chapter summarizes the important steps in the history of endangered plant protection at the national level in the United States. As such, it is a good introduction to the nationally endangered plants that follow in later chapters.

Chapters 2–8 are regional accounts of endangered plants. Informative, interesting and highly readable, they do an excellent job of telling the fascinating stories behind these plants. The more technical information is omitted, and the text emphasizes the humanistic aspects. One learns about many famous past and present American botanists, and how they contributed to our knowledge of these rare plants. The poem about Furbish's Lousewort, written by Charles Osgood of CBS, is particularly enjoyable. There are many interesting anecdotes of Mohlenbrock's personal experience with the plants. They reveal the problems and pleasures of field botany and the genuine excitement that occurs when something rare and beautiful is found for the first time.

The front flap of the dust jacket promotes the book as a field guide, but I believe that it is primarily a book to be read and enjoyed indoors. Its use in the field to distinguish endangered plants from

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others is rather limited. Mohlenbrock has numerous qualifications and achievements which rank him as an eminent conservationist. The present book is a culmination of these conservation interests at the national level.

ROBBIN C. MORAN  
ILLINOIS NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY  
607 E. PEABODY DR.  
CHAMPAIGN, IL 61820